9:Fosbrooke G-5 (1936-1948) 1948 FL12 Masai FL12
Kisonko

When blood-money is paid, it is less when the

payment is between clansmen. The logical extension of this principle is that when cattle are due from one member of the clan they may be taken from any of his clansmen. This is in fact the rule for payment of compensation amongst the Masai, though the offender and his near relatives naturally pay more. In the one case of blood money in which details were obtained, members of sub-clans other than that of the murderer contributed, and it is, therefore, safe to calculate that clan responsibility and cohesion applies to the whole clan in greater degree than it does to the sub-clans.

B. **Family matters — the boma system — the 'gates' — polygamy — marriage statistics — number of cattle to each gate — relations in law — travelling — adoption — economic.**

Briefly, the Masai live in groups of families, usually three, four or five together, in a village comprising a ring of huts, built immediately inside a circular fence, which thus forms an enclosure for the cattle. Such villages are usually built some two or three miles, frequently more, from the water which the cattle use, so that it is unusual to find more than two or three bomas in close proximity. Frequently a boma is a mile or more from its nearest neighbour. In the village each family possesses a separate gate, *engishome*, round which its members are grouped.

It is difficult to define a typical family or 'gate' unit. The ideal of a Masai elder is to possess half a dozen wives with many children, ranged on either side of his gate. As he marries he places the first on the right of the gate, and the second on the left; when a third wife comes in she builds her hut immediately to the right of the gate, and the fourth immediately to the left, the earlier wives moving round accordingly. Each wife on arrival is given a number of cattle, which are hers to hold in trust for her children. She is also given, for tending, some of the unallocated cattle which the elder holds in reserve for future marriages; such cattle are termed *engishu e boo*. Those living to the right and the left of the gate form two distinct groups, *indaloishin*, and for the purpose of inheritance, should a wife on the left die without male issue, her cattle will be inherited by the senior male on the left of the gate; they may in no circumstances be taken by an heir on the right so long as there is a son on the left to inherit.

When the sons are circumcised, they nominally take over the guardianship of their mother, and of the cattle allocated to her. In the old days they would move off with her to the manyatta, warriors' village, but this is less frequent now. As they approach elderhood, however, in polygamous families the sons at times claim their patrimony and move off with their mothers, to form a separate gate in some other boma. More frequently they show little desire for this responsibility, and spend the greater part of their period of warriorhood wandering round the countryside, or living in meat-camps in the bush (*ol pul*). Once they become elders it is exceptional for a son to continue to live with his father, except when the latter has reached senility.

This is the theory of the gate system, but in practice it varies very considerably from the ideal. Polygamy (see below) is limited by the

9:Fosbrooke G-5 (1936-1948) 1948 FL12 Masai FL12
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595 number of women available; at times a poor relation will join in a gate with a richer one; again, mothers and mothers-in-law and deceased brothers' wives are frequently included; and nowadays married warriors [592] are found staying on with their fathers. Thus a symmetrically arranged 'gate' is seldom found in practice.

The practical effect of this system is that a Masai elder attempts to main a constant succession of wives, marrying new ones to replace those who depart with their sons. As there are no unmarried adult women amongst the Masai, this means that senile old men take to wife girls only just past the age of puberty. As such girls have previously been accustomed to the companionship, both sexual and social, of the moran, it is little to be wondered at that they frequently run away, or attempt to run away, with their erstwhile companions. The elders have no idea of preventing this by making the girls' married life more attractive than their previous one; their only remedy is force.

[52] The two primary motives for polygamy are the desire for children, and the necessity to have women to tend the cattle. There is little sexual jealousy amongst the Masai; within the age-set the wives are [836 837] communal to all age-mates, and an age-mate known to be the father of one's child is regarded as a special friend. Intercourse between men of one age and the wives of another is nominally prohibited, but its [572] extensive practice is acknowledged by the Masai, and in fact receives general connivance. Concerning the economic motive for polygamy, increasing herds necessitate more women to tend them, and at the same [583] time offer the means of obtaining such women. Not that the actual dowry is heavy — usually three heifers and a bullock — but a man prefers to marry off his daughters to a rich elder, rather than to a poor moran. Thus economics and sociology are closely linked, and action in one sphere will have repercussions in the other.

162 595 The extent to which polygyny is practised can be judged from the following table :—

Distribution of Wives amongst Adult Male Population.

	Kibaya		*Samatwa*		*Engasu-met*		*Longido*		*Total*	
	men	wives	men	wives	men	wives	men	wives	men	wives
Total unmarried	102	—	135	—	53	—	151	—	441	—
One wife	65	65	82	82	50	50	134	134	331	331
Two wives	46	92	46	92	15	30	46	92	153	306
Three wives	13	39	12	36	11	33	10	30	46	138
Four wives	8	32	6	24	5	20	1	4	20	80
Five wives	1	5	2	10	1	5	—	—	4	20
Over five wives	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	25	4	25
Total polygamists	68	—	66	—	32	—	61	—	227	—
Total of men and women	235	233	283	244	135	138	346	285	999	900

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These figures were obtained by reading through tax registers to groups of elders, who supplied the information. The number of wives showing in the registers were not revealed to them, and it was noted that in many cases the numbers given by the elders exceded those recorded in the books.

The percentages to be drawn from this table are of special interest when compared with another tribe. For this reason they are tabulated below, in conjunction with those of the Hehe, figures from Brown and Hutt's 'Anthropology in Action', page 107.

Marriage Statistics.

	MASAI	*HEHE*	
Unmarried men	42.2%	25.3%	) of adult
Men with one wife	33.1%	46.4%	) male
Men with two or more wives ...	22.7%	28.3%	) population.
Wives for every 100 married men ...	161	153	

Two points of interest arise from these figures. The first is the much larger proportion of unmarried men amongst the Masai. These fall mainly in the warrior class, as the following table shows :—

Marriage of Moran.

	Kibaya	*Samatwa*	*Engasumet*	*Longido*	*Total*
Total moran	123	159	66	234	582
Total married moran	17	23	20	85	145
Percentage married	13.8%	14.5%	30.3%	36.3%	28.0%

The other interesting point is that one would expect both the percentage of polygamous marriages to total marriages, and the number of married women per 100 men to be much higher in the case of the Masai than the figures actually reveal. The reason for this lies in the number of dependent women not classified by the Masai as wives. The first table shows that for 999 adult males there are only 900 wives; but census figures show a preponderance of females over males, and the 999 males probably represent at least 1,200 adult females, the balance being made up by mothers (with husbands still alive) living with their moran sons, deceased brothers' wives with male issue, (not therefore taken to wife), etc.

In one area the distribution of the women (wives only) amongst the ages was worked out; it was found that there were approximately 2 wives to every Dwati, 1.5 to every Dareto and 0.3 only to every Kisale.

Although it was found that on an average each gate pays only four taxes, the probability is that there are usually more than four huts to a gate, for those moran who pay tax but do not possess a hut are thought to be more than offset by those women who do possess a hut yet pay no tax. The number of cattle to each gate were examined in the Longido area, with the results shown in the table below :—

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Cattle per Gate.

Number of cattle.		Gates.		Percentage.
Under 50	—	52	—	10.1%
50 — 100	—	92	—	17.9%
101 — 200	—	193	—	37.5%
201 — 300	—	115	—	22.4%
301 — 400	—	34	—	6.8%
401 — 500	—	11	—	2.1%
501 — 600	—	9	—	1.7%
601 — 700	—	3		
701 — 800	—	2		
801 — 900	—	1	—	1.5%
901 —1000	—	1		
Over 1000	—	1		
		Total 514		

As 156,966 cattle were owned by these 514 gates it follows that the *average* number per gate is just over three hundred, but this figure is *misleading*, for two-thirds of the gates possess less than two hundred head.*

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The advantages of marriage not only include the acquisition of a woman to bear one's children and to tend one's cattle. For marriage sets up a new relationship with one's wife's family, whereby each party is expected to help the other. If a father-in-law loses his cattle by drought or disease, the son-in-law is expected to contribute towards a new herd; if a son-in-law strikes hard times, the father-in-law — if only for the sake of his daughter — will transfer cattle to him.

At times, also, a daughter will, by amicable arrangement with the son-in-law, return to live with her father for considerable periods, being visited from time to time by her husband, or again a grandson will be sent from home to help herd his grandfather's cattle.

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The fulfilment of these various obligations leads to much travelling and consequent contact, almost as much as the actual betrothal and marriage does. This latter is a lengthy process. Early betrothal is the rule and involves a long engagement, during which the man is expected to maintain contact with his future in-laws. Frequent travelling is also necessary in other connections; for example a man goes himself or sends a son to examine the water and pasture of the area to which he proposes to move, and as we have seen the moran are always on the move, visiting friends, begging bullocks for meat-feasts, etc. So in spite of the size of the area which they inhabit, and of their scattered settlements, the Masai maintain very close contact amongst themselves.

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Another point of considerable importance in Masai family affairs is the *adoption of children*, frequently practised both in respect of Masai

* The mean number of cattle per gate lies between 100 and 200 or between 25 and 50 head per adult male taxpayer—Ed.

13:Huntingford E-4 (no date) 1953 FL12 Masai FL12

are taken in another direction, which means that they drink only on alternate days, but at the same time graze over a larger area than if they went to water every day, thus helping to conserve the grazing. There are two types of kraal. The married men with their wives and children live in one type, and the warriors with their mothers, sisters, and girl lovers in another type. The main structural difference between the two types seems to be that the warriors' kraal has no fence, while the elders' kraal is surrounded by a thorn fence. The elders' kraal varies in size: it may contain from seven to several hundred huts, though very large examples (such as were seen by Teleki and von Höhnel) are probably uncommon; the average is probably about 20 to 50. The warriors' kraal may contain between 50 and 100. In the elders' kraal the huts are built round the inside of the fence, which is also the enclosure in which the livestock are housed at night. The number of gates in the fence depends upon the number and size of the families which live in it. Each family has exclusive rights over at least one gate, and a large family with many cattle has more than one. The kraal, *enk-ay*, thus approximates to a village, for several families live in it, and the gate, *kishomi*, has come to typify the family, the word being used with the article (*en-kishomi*) as a synonym for *ol-mɔɔi*, "the family." When a man sets up his home in a kraal, he puts his first wife in a hut on the right of his gate as one goes in, and the second wife on the left; the third, if he has one, goes on the right, and the fourth on the left, and so on, the huts being so arranged that each succeeding wife lives immediately to the right or left of her gate. The people on each side of the gate form two distinct groups, *is-tabishin*, the effect of which is felt most in matters of inheritance. (See below, p. 108.) The warriors' *kraal* or *e-manyata* is inhabited by all the members of one age-set in one district, who constitute a company, *sirit*, and the kraals are built in strategic positions. With the men live their mothers, and some young sisters who help their mothers, and if old enough become lovers of warriors. The mother, her warrior son, and younger children share a hut, all sleeping on separate beds; when the warrior wants to sleep with his lover he goes to another hut. The mother's husband may visit her at any time, and when he comes her hut must be given up to the pair. The inhabitants of a *manyata* vary considerably in number, ranging from 30 to several hundred.

Livestock

Cattle

Cattle, *in-kishu*, are the object on which the lives of the Masai are centred, and on which their whole existence depends. Their importance is both material and spiritual, and people who perform any kind of work other than tending cattle are despised by the Masai, whose attitude towards cattle is similar to that of the Nandi. The Masai believe that in the beginning God gave them all the cattle in the world, and therefore nobody else has a right to possess any. Cattle provide the Masai warrior with his food in the form of milk, blood, and meat, and they give him spiritual and mental satisfaction through their existence, though it would seem that there is less outward and ritual expression of the love of cattle than among some other East African tribes who combine pastoralism with agriculture. This, however, does not by any means indicate that the Masai are an agricultural people who have wholly given up agriculture and taken to pastoralism. Since the Masai, unlike the Nandi, kill large numbers of their cattle for eating, it was essential in the past for them to maintain the size of their herds by continual raiding, for the natural reproduction rate would not have been enough. On account of its high ritual value, milk may not be drunk on the same day that meat is eaten, nor may it be boiled; but it may be drunk mixed with blood. Grass also has a high ritual value, being the food of cattle, and is used as a sign of peace. In 1930 the average size of an elder's herd was officially estimated at about 75 head of cattle, 86 sheep and goats, and 18 donkeys; this was based on the estimate of 720,000 as the total number of cattle belonging to the Kenya Masai. In Tanganyika, it was found that the average number

of cattle to a family (*kishomi*) in 1948 was between 100 and 200 head. There appears to be no such system as the Nandi *koptic* or Kipsikis *kimanakan*. (See above, p. 21.) Milking is done by girls and women into gourds; the calf is allowed to suck, and if it dies the skin, sometimes stuffed with grass and called *ol-kuta*, is presented to the cow at each milking. The milk yield is about three pints a day. Cattle are bled in the same way as by the Nandi, with a blocked arrow, *ol-goret*, shot into the jugular vein, and the blood is caught in a gourd. Sheep also are bled. Cattle are branded with marks on the rump or flank which indicate the owner's clan or sub-clan, with sometimes a private mark as well; the ears are also clipped for the same purpose. Salt for cattle is obtained by driving the herds to a salt-lick, *em-bolioi*. The Masai are said to have effective remedies for diseases of cattle, but their efficacy has never been enough to prevent heavy loss during epidemics of rinderpest and pleuro-pneumonia.

Donkeys

The Masai keep large numbers of donkeys (*i-sirkon*, sing. *e-sikiria*) which are used for carrying their goods when they move house (*idur*). Donkeys are marked by slitting the ears in different ways.

The Status of Cattle

The status of cattle as regards ownership is uncertain. Merker says that warriors may own cattle; Thomson says they may not, and on such a point the statements of a traveller are open to question. Fosbrooke says that they may.[1] But further investigation of cattle as property, and of their status in the light of ritual value is required.

Inheritance of Cattle

There does not seem to be any clear account of the rules which control the division of a man's stock among his sons. The guiding principle is that the eldest son of the senior wife gets the largest share, inheriting not only the cattle given in trust to his mother, but also those which his father had kept for his own use. Inheritance is affected also by the "gate" (*kishomi*) arrangement in the kraal, for cattle may not pass from one side to the other. If a wife on the left side dies without sons, her cattle may not go to a man on the right side so long as there are any sons by other wives on the left side. This subject also needs further investigation.

Grazing and Water Rights

Land is not owned by individuals, but by the sub-tribe (*ol-oiko*), and grazing rights are acquired by residence. Water rights are controlled by the clan. In the old days, when the Masai occupied new territory, each warrior, according to tradition, claimed a well, spring, or water-hole on behalf of his clan. Individual rights over water are thus ruled out by tradition, and the senior member of a clan living at the water decides, after consultation with other clansmen, the order in which people take their cattle to water. But a Masai when actually on the move with cattle may claim, and must be given, priority over local cattle at any well or spring. Where water is plentiful, however, as in a river, possession is communal.

Division of Labour

In a purely pastoral society like that of the Masai the expression "economic unit" has little meaning, but so far as it can be said to exist, it is the family. It must be remembered, however, that the normal practice is for families to be divided between the father's kraal, *enk-ang*, and the warriors' kraal, *e-manyata*, and that the

[1] Fosbrooke, personal communication.

[For details of the (K-shomi) arrangement in residence, see p. 109. --Analyst]

13:Huntingford E-4 (no date) 1953 FL12 Masai FL12

latter is of little economic significance, except that it is the duty of the warriors to get cattle by raiding. In the division of work, the people mainly concerned are the uncircumcised boys, the girls, and the women. The boys do most of the herding, assisted by the elders. Women and girls milk and act as servants to the warriors. The girls do household work till they are old enough to become lovers of the warriors, when they do very little work. The greater part of the work thus falls on the older women, who besides doing or supervising the milking and other ordinary household tasks like fetching water and firewood, build the huts, load and drive the donkeys when moving, prepare skins for clothing, and trade with neighbouring tribes for food and other things. The warriors used to be occupied exclusively either with war or preparations for war, or with dancing, visiting, and making love. Their military activities have today been replaced by certain tasks connected with cattle, and by cattle-stealing and raids on neighbouring tribes. The senior elders are occupied with political matters, and some of them with the instruction and control of the initiates and younger warriors; they also help with the herding, and take part in trading with the neighbouring peoples.

The only specialists in the economic sphere are the smiths, *il-kunono*, sing. *el-kunono*, who live segregated from the rest of the Masai, and marry among themselves. They have a distinctly inferior status, and are despised by the Masai, who oil their hands before taking anything from a smith. At one time the smiths lived near deposits of iron ore, such as those in the Matapato river; but nowadays the availability of trade-iron has given them greater freedom of domicile. They make the iron-work used by the Masai, including spears, swords, and ornaments.[1]

Though according to Hollis a few Masai women made pottery, the Masai as a rule buy their pots from the Bantu.

Food

Except among the agricultural Masai, no cereal or vegetable food at all is grown, nor was it eaten in the old days by warriors, whose diet consisted of meat, milk, and blood, the latter providing the necessary salt. The animals eaten included their own cattle, buffalo, *el-oarowuas*, and eland, *e-sirua*, which they considered to be related to cattle, and therefore fit to eat.[2] Warriors were not allowed to eat honey, to drink honey-wine, or to take tobacco, though some took snuff. Children and married people eat vegetable food, and the meat of cattle which die a natural death. Warriors when they want to eat meat, build a rough shelter called *el-pul* in the bush where, accompanied by a boy to do the work, small groups feast upon the meat of an ox supplied by the father of one of their number. The elder who supplies the ox is given some of the meat, and this is one of the regular sources of meat for married people, for meat eating is the regular practice of warriors. Men and women do not eat together, and fish, fowls, eggs, and game other than buffalo and eland are not eaten by any Masai.

Trade

Since the Masai are not self-supporting, they have to trade with the Bantu agriculturists, *il-meek*, whom they despise, in order to get what they want. Their chief suppliers are the Kikuyu, Chaga, and Taveta; and for certain things, notably ivory and honey, the Dorobo. The media of exchange are cattle (old, barren, and otherwise unsatisfactory cows), old and thin goats and sheep, donkeys, butter, and hides. The principal goods bought are food (beans, millet, maize) and tobacco, which they get from the Bantu; the chief suppliers of meat are Indian traders, often Sikhs,

[1] Leakey says that the Masai buy their swords from the Kikuyu (*JRAI*, LX, p. 398); this may well be the case near the Kikuyu border, though it is perhaps a recent development.

[2] The Galla also consider the buffalo to be the equivalent of the ox. Sadney, *Missione Galla*, chap. XX, Galla.

/28 cont./

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Ill. 9. Small pen on the hut.

• 592 What is not used in her own household in the way of milk, meat, and skins /59/ /11a-10 and 11 appear here/ /59/ is her housekeeping money, with which she buys vegetable foods and such household objects as she does not make herself. She is not supervised in this in any way by her husband. It is beneath his dignity to interfere in these affairs.

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Approximately every three to six days caravans of old women, accompanied by a few old men and laden with maize, bananas, batatas, etc., arrive in the Masai kraals. Then there begins an hours-long haggling and bargaining with the customary market-woman shouting. Each one tries to sell her goods as advantageously as possible, that is, exchange them for just the articles that she needs. Often the caravans come from a distance of four to five days' march and then remain in the kraal for a couple of days before they set out for home.

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• 572 422 [434] The earnings of the men who are growing up to become warriors consist of captured livestock and in the main pass into the father's herd. Actual separate goods for the individual members of the family are only clothing and ornaments, for the men also their weapons, and further for boys the livestock given to them by the father, for youths and warriors the share of the captured cattle which they keep for themselves.

572 573 The family head is the father of the family. If an older man of his family also lives with him or in the same or a closely neighboring kraal, the two share in the office of the head in such a manner that in all decisions people listen to and heed the counsel of the older one. Legally the head can be deposed by his brethren for mismanagement and incompetence, but this seems to take place only very exceptionally. The [illegible] in family matters. A right to kill and penalize the members does not belong to the father of the family; just as he is not responsible for their debts and misdeeds, neither may he sell or pledge them. The fact that during the famine caused by two cattle epidemics that followed each other in a short time around the year 1890 children and women were given into slavery by their relatives does not prove anything to the contrary. When the corpses of many thousands of the starved lay in the steppe and there was no food of any kind for the survivors, no escape remained for them other than to give themselves or their relatives as serfs to such people as could feed them.

573 591 613 Individual members may detach themselves on account of bad treatment. One who detaches himself from a member of his lineage or to the one from which his mother steps and purchases his admission with a few cattle that he has stolen from his father's herd and takes along. If he found acceptance in the latter, he must return to his own as soon as he becomes a father.

If a girl is expelled, she may freely choose her future abode, irrespective of tribe or lineage. Whenever she finds admittance /57/ she usually remains permanently, in that she marries a member of this lineage. That is, the men and girls taken in remain nonmembers of the lineage, despite their admission, so that they can enter into a legal marriage with members of the lineage concerned.

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593 consent. One who is expelled from the family because of bad behavior is, as a rule, taken in again upon payment of a head of cattle or a goat. Whenever he hands over the animal to a man friendly to his lineage. The latter takes it to the father of the one expelled and requests reacceptance for him. If it is refused, the one expelled seeks and finds acceptance in the same manner as the detached one. Detachment and expulsion occur only in very

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Becker phot.

Ill. 11. Kraal of the married.

593 rare cases and have no influence on the right of succession. The
[516] rights of the head over the individual members of the family lapse
[1911] legally upon their marriage, but not yet practically, since, conditioned by attachment and respect for the elder, lasting concessions are made to him in questionable matters.

/31 cont./

517 For the most part an atmosphere of dullness and boredom lies
535 over the kraal of the married (eng ai el morusi). Only on moon-
[533] lit evenings /32/ do the women amuse themselves with song, es-
pecially if a few warriors are there on a visit and give the impetus
for the gaiety. Women and warriors dance in separate groups.
For dancing the women station themselves in a row, move forward
a short distance, then make a "right turn" and, with short steps,
dance in a row back to the former place. The married men dance
only on festive occasions, but by themselves. The text of the
accompanying song naturally refers to the life prevailing here.

517 Otherwise quiet prevails in the family kraal after darkness has
521 set in: in good weather the people will sit for a while in front of
513 the huts, silently or softly conversing, and go to rest already at
8:00 o'clock or 8:30.

621 Even 12-14 years ago, before the Masai lost their huge
• 592 livestock-holdings in two great epidemics, each family had its
178 own kraal; now, on the other hand, almost everywhere several
233 families live together.
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In the morning life begins around 4:00 o'clock, at which time
512 the women fetch the quite young calves from the compartments
[462] and take them to the cows, where they remain for the driving out
[233] to pasture. At daybreak the milking commences, for which all
[234] the women appear. After it is finished, breakfast, consisting of
264 fresh milk, is taken. Milk, soups, and thin porridge are drunk
[512] from gourd bottles; foods of greater consistency are put in the
[262] mouth with the fingers. Meat is partially cut up with a knife and
[415] completely torn into bits with the teeth. The hands are not washed
[412] before a meal. Smacking and belching while eating show good
breeding. Men and women eat apart and have their separate
vessels for eating and drinking. Those of the latter are shared by
the children. If the man wishes to eat in the hut, the woman has
to leave it beforehand.